

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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EB-07 AGR-05 TRSE-00 COME-00 OMB-01 ARAE-00 /073 W

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P R 181950Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7893

INFO :AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY 3461

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAN SALVADOR 1509

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PGOV, ES, HO

SUBJECT: REACTION TO EVENTS IN HONDURAS

REF: (A) SAN SALVADOR 1441

(B) SAN SALVADOR 1412

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. SUMMARY - INTEREST IN EVENTS IN HONDURAS REMAINS HIGH. NEWS COVERAGE IS THE FOR MOST PART BALANCED. THE EDITORIAL COMMENT TO DATE, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, HAS GIVEN RELATIVELY EVEN TREATMENT TO CHARGES AGAINST BOTH THE COMPANY AND THOSE WHO ACCEPTED THE BRIBES. ALL CALL FOR A THOROUGH REVELATION OF THE FACTS. THE GOES HAS STILL NOT COMMENTED BEYOND THE PRESIDENT'S REPORTED FEELING THAT A CA SUMNIT MEETING SHOULD NOT BE HELD UNTIL THE SITUATION IN HONDURAS IS CLEARER. FONMIN BORGONOVO EXPRESSED HIS AMAZEMENT TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT LOPEZ HAS HELD ON, NAD PASSED ON AN IMPRESSION THAT LOPEZ' SUCCESSOR HAS BEEN PICKED. THE MEETING AT THE BORDER LAST WEEK BETWEEN THE TWO MILITARIES

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WAS A SUCCESS, WITH THE HONDURANS GIVING IMPRESSION THAT

THEY BELIEVE LOPEZ INNOCENT. END SUMMARY.

2. INTEREST IN THE UNRAVELLING SUBORNATION SCANDAL, ALTHOUGH CONTINUING AT A HIGH LEVEL, HAS BEEN DRIVEN OFF MOST SALFADORAN FRONT PAGES BY OTHER STORIES. NEWS TREATMENT OF THE STORY CONTINUES HEAVY, HOWEVER, AND IS MOSTLY DRAWN FROM WIRE SERVICE COVERAGE (REFTEL A).

3. EDITORIALS HAVE NOW APPREARED IN ALL LEADING NEPL ' 6\$7(FOR THE MOST PART, THEIR OVERALL TONE HAS BEEN ONE OF INDIGNATION AT BOTH THE OFFERER AND RECIPIENT OF THE BRIBE, A PLEA FOR A THOROUGH AND IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION AND PUBLIC REVELATION OF THE FACTS, AND CONSIDERABLE DOUBT THAT THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION WILL BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION. ONLY ONE EDITORIAL HAS MADE A MACHIAVELLIAN CONNECTION WITH THE HONDURAN-SALVADORAN DISPUTE.

4. THE DIARIO DE HOY OF APRIL 12 SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE COMMISION BY ASKING WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS THE ARCHBISHOP AND OTHERS LIKE HIM COULD MAKE IN THE APPOINTED TASK. "AN INVESTIGATION SUCH AS THIS REQUIRED TECHNICIANS IN ACCOUNTING" AND NOT A COLLECTION OF DIGNITARIES. THE DIARIO AMPLIFIED ITS DEEP CONCERN OVER THE ARCHBISHOP'S PARTICIPATION TWO DAYS LATER BY SAYING THAT HE IS "LIKE ALL ARCHBISHOPS WHO COMMITE THE ERROR OF DIALOGING WITH DICTATORS, AND END UP BEING SIMPLY DECORATIVE FIGURES OR SECRETLY COMPROMISED INTO PARTICIPATING IN THE SOCIAL SUBVERSION" WHICH AFFECTS TODAY'S WORLD. THE DIARIO'S EDITORIALS EXPRESSED A COMPLETE LACK OF SURPRISE AT UNITED BRANDS CONNECTION SINCE "WE HAVE BEEN WRITING FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS THAT UNITED FRUIT HAS ENGAGED IN EVERY IMAGINABLE FORM OF CORRUPTION"... IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

5. THE OTHER MAJOR DAILY, LA PRENSA, HAS BEEN MORE WILLING IN ITS EDITORIALS TO SPECULATE ON THE GUILT OF LOPEZ ARELLANA. ON APRIL 12 IT OPINED THAT "THE FACTS SURROUNDING THE REDUCTION OF THE BANANA TAX ARE STRONG CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE IMPLICATING LOPEZ...". IT WENT ON TO PREDICT THAT "WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE UNRAVELLING OF THE EVIDENCE OF THIS INTERNATIONAL SCANDAL, LOPEZ CAN BE CONSIDERED FINISHED. . ." OTHER LA PRENSA EDITORIALS SPECULATED ON THE EFFECT OF ALL THIS

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ON CENTRAL AMERICA, POINTING TO THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE NEXT CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING AND SAYING IT ALL "PROVES THAT AN EVENT IN ANY ONE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRY HAS REPURCUSSIONS IN ALL."

6. ONLY ONE NEWSPAPER HAS GONE WELL BEYOND THE FACTS THAT HAVE EMERGED TO DATE AND MADE A LEAP OF THE IMAGINATION TO CONNECT THE BRIBE TO THE BILATERAL DISPUTE. THE DIARIO

LATINO OF APRIL 11 SAID THAT THE REVELATIONS OF UB'S SKILL IN BRIBERY AND OTHER SCULDUGGERY MAKES "US BELIEVE THAT WE WERE VICTIMS OF THESE TECHNIQUES

IN 1969." (AFTER THE 1969

WAR, THE STORY WENT AROUND THAT THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS WAS CAUSED IN GREAT PARTY UNITED BRAND'S SUBORNATION OF HONDURAN OFFICIALS FOR THE PURPOSE OF GETTING THE GOH TO DRIVE OFF THE SALVADORANS WHO HAD WORKED ON UB'S BANANA PLANTATIONS. THE CHARGE WAS THAT THE COMPANY WANTED THEM REMOVED TO DRIVE DOWN THE COST OF LABOR). THIS CONCLUSION, THAT THE UB IS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "GENOCIDE" AND HARDSHIPS COMMITTED AGAINST THE SALVADORAN VICTIMS OF 1969, HAS ALSO APPEARED IN A DIARIO DE HOY INTERVIEW WITH A LOCAL JURIST.

7. THE GOES STILL HAS NOT SPOKEN OUT PUBLICALLY ON THE WHOLE SCANDAL, NOR IS IT LIKELY TO. THE DIARIO DE HOY OF APRIL 17 DID CARRY A STORY WHICH QUOTED "OFFICIAL SOURCES" HERE AS DENYING A STORY OUT OF MANAGUA THAT A MEETING OF CA CHIEFS OF STATE HAD BEEN SCHEDULED IN COSTA RIVA FOR APRIL 26 "TO OFFER CA SUPPORT TO GENERAL LOPEZ." THE DIARIO ARTICLE SAID THAT PRESIDENT MOLINA HAD COMMUNICATED TO HIS COS COLLEAGUES HIS WISH TO POSTPONE SUCH A MEETING UNTIL THE SITUATION IN HONDURAS IS CLARIFIED. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT MOLINA DOESN'T WISH TO GIVE ANY FRATERNAL SUPPORT UNTIL LOPEZ' IS PROVEN FEE OF GUILT.

8. THE AMBASSADOR CALLED ON FONMIN BORGONOVO ON APRIL 16. BORGONOVO ADMITTED THAT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CA CHIEFS OF STATE, DUE TO BE HELD IN COSTA RICA DURING APRIL, HAD BEEN POSTPONED DUE TO THE HONDURAN SCANDAL. HE SAID IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER DEVELOPMENTS IN HONDURAS WILL PERMIT A MAY MEETING (THE FONMIN CONFIRMED THAT THE CONSENSUS CONFIDENTIAL

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OF JALAPA WAS TO HOLD A MONTHLY CA SUMMIT MEETING).

9. BORGONOVO ALSO DISCUSSED THE APRIL 11 MEETING AT THE FRONTIER (REFTEL B) BETWEEN THE GENERAL STAFFS OF THE TWO MILITARIES (SEE FOLLOING PARAGRAPH). HE SAID THAT THE SALVADORANS HAD COME AWAY WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT AN OFFICER NAMED MALDONADO (PRESUMABLY LT. COL. MARIO MALDONADO, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE), WAS BEING GROOMED TO REPLACE LOPEZ. HE ADDED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT NICARAGUAN PRESIDENT SOMOZA FAVORED SUCH A MOVE. BORGONOVO ENDED BY DESCRIBING HIS SURPRISE THAT LOPEZ HAS MANAGED TO HOLD ON THIS LOND IO LIGHT OF THE SCANDAL. HE EXPRESSED AMAZEMENT AT THE MAN'S CAPACITJ TO CLING TO OFFICE.

10. FROM DATT SOURCES, WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE MILITARY MEETING ON APRIL 11 AT AMATILLO ON BORDER WENT EXTREMELY WELL, WITH ABRAZOS AND COMRADERIE ALL AROUND. THE SALVADORANS, HEADED BY ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF RODRIGUEZ (REFTEL OMITTED HIS PARTICIPATION), CAME AWAY CONVINCED THAT THEIR HONDURAN COLLEAGUES BELIEVED THAT LOPEZ WAS NOT REPEAT NO GUILTY AS CHARGED. THE HONDURANS REPORTEDLY TOLD THEIR COLLEAGUES THAT IF LOPEZ WERE PROVEN GUILTY, HOWEVER, THEY WOULD QUICKLY REMOVE HIM FROM OFFICE. DATT REPORTS THAT A SECOND MEETING, ALSO WITH CHIEFS OF STAFF BUT DIFFERENT ASSISTANTS, IS TAKING PLACE TODAY AT NUEVA OCOTEPEQUE, ON NORTHER FRONTIER. CAMPBELL

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